



Professor Jennifer Philip, lead researcher and palliative care physician

## The Royal Melbourne Hospital: The PARTNER study: delivering best outcomes in palliative care

Palliative care patients who experience worsening symptoms are often unsure how to seek help. Changing symptoms can herald a change in the illness or a new complication. If recognised early, responses may be put in place, but if not recognised, the complication may worsen and can result in emergency presentation.

"While patients and their family members are very aware of symptoms, and for many they may even be a cause of suffering, they do not always report them to their doctors and nurses," explains Professor Jennifer Philip.

"Clinicians also do not always carefully or systematically enquire about symptoms, so they can go unrecognised. If left unaddressed, the suffering may continue."

### Paying close attention to the patient experience

Patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) are routinely used for monitoring patients' experiences, including symptom burden in people with advanced disease.

Monitoring PROMs can lead to improved symptom management, improved quality of life, fewer ED presentations, and improved survival, yet collection of PROMs is not part of routine care.

The PARTNER (PATient ReporTed Needs Recording) study will pilot a system of remote PROMS monitoring based on smart phone/electronic devices for palliative care patients at home. Patients with advanced illness will receive regular text message reminders with a link to complete monitoring surveys related to their health status. High scores will trigger an alert to a triaging clinician for review, which may include community palliative care, outpatient clinics, or urgent assessment.

### Towards improving healthcare

"Through a systematic approach to symptom reporting and response, we believe that patient experiences of illness and quality of care will be improved," says Professor Philip.



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"Most importantly, recognising, reporting and responding to symptoms is a key part of care delivery. When we do this well, quality of life can improve – this is a core goal of palliative care," says Professor Philip.

The impact of the PARTNER study outcomes will aim to reduce the personal and economic burdens endured by those living with advanced chronic illness, including a reduction of personal costs of distress for patients and families, reduction of unscheduled emergency care and reduction of health service use overall. The study is expected to conclude by the end of 2023.

*Professor Philip of the Royal Melbourne Hospital was the lead researcher of the project that received an Avant Foundation grant.*



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